

LOCAL CHAPTER NETWORK UPDATE

by Tip Walker

on behalf of the LCN Leadership Council

At the beginning of each year the LCN Leadership Council contacts chapter leaders to collect information on when each chapter was created, the frequency of meetings, the number of members, and the average number of meeting attendees. We also ask chapter leaders to let us know to what extent they enjoy being chapter leaders. We thought our readers would be interested in what we learned.

Currently we have 63 chapters around the world. Thirty-eight of these chapters are in the U.S., and the remaining 25 are in other countries. We have local chapters in 22 U.S. states and in 16 countries. All local chapters combined have approximately 2500 people on their membership lists. On average, 550 people attend meetings regularly. Individual chapter meeting attendance ranges from 2-20 people with 6-10 being a fairly typical number. Many local chapter meetings are held in private homes, however, a significant number of chapter leaders rent space in which to conduct their meetings.

We have remained fairly stable in terms of the number of active local chapters and regular attendees. This year we learned that several chapters had disbanded for a variety of reasons, but in most cases those losses were offset by the formation of new chapters. This past year we saw the creation of chapters in Hillsborough (NJ), Charlottesville (VA), Orlando (FL), Los Angeles (CA), Szeged (Hungary), and Taipei (Taiwan).

The Leadership Council and Regional Coordinators do their best to stay in touch with local chapter leaders since we know that without the leaders' dedication and commitment of time and effort, there would be no Local Chapter Network. While many chapter leaders continue to be enthusiastic and enjoy their responsibilities, we also find that some chapter leaders do get discouraged over time. The primary cause of that discouragement is poor meeting attendance. There are some extreme cases where a chapter leader has driven two or more hours one way to the meeting location, set up all the audio equipment, and provided snacks for the group and no one shows up. A critical piece to the success of local chapters is a commitment on the part of members to attend meetings on a fairly regular basis. If they are not able to attend, it is much appreciated when they let their chapter leader know in advance.

The LCN Leadership Council is currently looking into the possibility of creating virtual chapters as an option when a physical gathering is not feasible. Many people live in areas far removed

from a local chapter. Other people may be hesitant to attend meetings because of poor driving conditions or health issues such as mobility challenges.

The details of how these meetings might take place are being explored, and a pilot project is in the works. The basic idea is that people would connect through an audio or video conference service. There are many free or relatively inexpensive options such as Skype, Google Hangouts, and others. After a few minutes of conversation, the chapter leader would officially start the meeting. If the group has been reading a consciousness-related book such as Robert Monroe's *Journeys out of the Body*, the chapter leader could then guide a discussion. If the group wished to listen to a Hemi-Sync® or SAM™ audio exercise, the chapter leader would provide some background information such as the name, purpose, and general progression of the exercise. Chapter members would then suspend their audio/video conferencing session to go listen to the exercise. At the conclusion of the exercise, the group would log back onto the audio/video conferencing service to discuss their experiences.

The question naturally arises as to how members would access audio exercises. There are a number of free downloads available through The Monroe Institute website. Another possibility is for members to pay a fee and download an exercise either through TMI or Monroe Products. While there is an expense involved with this, it would be partially or completely offset by not having to pay for transportation to attend a meeting or make a donation towards meeting costs. Also, chapter members would have a copy of the exercise which they would own and could listen to anytime they wished.

Stay tuned as we begin to make virtual chapters a reality as a viable option. We hope that the virtual chapter option may result in the creation of additional chapters, increased attendance, and added vitality to the Local Chapter Network. Together there are no limits to what we can create.